Unit 4 Writing: Synthesis Essay

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 3**
Length: **10 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

The purpose of this unit is to challenge students to identify the relationships among a variety of sources. While synthesizing, students will learn how to look through a focused lens illustrating how the texts compare or relate. They may ask themselves: How are these sources alike? How do they relate? What common thread or pattern weaves its way through the sources? These skills will help acclimate students to the tasks and types of questions that they may encounter on the NJSLA exam while having them continue to practice general writing skills that can be used today and every day (in ELA & other subjects). To immerse students in synthesis, offer a variety of activities done in pairs and individually. Finally, students will create a product, synthesizing a variety of sources.

This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. In this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers.

Revised July 2023

Standards

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship. The standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below.

Additional applicable Interdisciplinary Standards and related requirements may be included:

Amistad Commission

This unit also reflects the goals of the Department of Education and the Amistad Commission including the infusion of the history of Africans and African-Americans into the curriculum in order to provide an accurate, complete, and inclusive history regarding the importance of African-Americans to the growth and

development of American society in a global context.

Asian American and Pacific Islander History Law

This unit includes instructional materials that highlight the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in accordance with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.

New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law

In accordance with New Jersey's Chapter 32 Diversity and Inclusion Law, this unit includes instructional materials that highlight and promote diversity, including:

economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religious tolerance.

Commission on Holocaust Education

This unit further reflects the goals of the Holocaust Education mandate where students are able to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior; understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life; and understand the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

LA.RI.7.5	Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.
LA.W.7.2.A	Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia).
LA.W.7.2.B	Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
LA.W.7.2.C	Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas

	and concepts.
LA.W.7.2.D	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
LA.W.7.2.E	Establish and maintain a formal style academic style, approach, and form.
LA.W.7.2.F	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
LA.W.7.5	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
LA.W.7.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.
	Research to Build and Present Knowledge
LA.W.7.7	Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
LA.W.7.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
LA.W.7.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
LA.W.7.9.A	Apply grade 7 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history”).
LA.W.7.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.SL.7.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.SL.7.2	Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.
LA.SL.7.4	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
LA.SL.7.5	Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.
LA.L.7.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.7.1.A	Explain the function of phrases and clauses in general and their function in specific sentences.
LA.L.7.1.B	Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to signal differing relationships among ideas.
LA.L.7.1.C	Place phrases and clauses within a sentence, recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers.
LA.L.7.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.7.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or

	listening.
LA.L.7.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
LA.L.7.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
LA.L.7.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

- How can we use multiple texts to synthesize information to support a claim?

- Students will create a toolbox of these skills and strategies to use on their academic journeys
- Students will apply these skills to other disciplines and everyday life.

- establishing the relationship between texts
- annotating sources to locate relevant evidence to support a claim
- applying note-taking method to the task

Students Will Know/Students will be Skilled at

- how to create a claim
- how to navigate through different sources
- how to read and annotate different sources
- how to organize information using a preferred note-taking method

Students will be able to independently use their learning to…

- Gather information from a variety of sources
- Synthesize information from multiple texts
- Compare and/or contrast texts
- Support claims using multiple pieces of evidence from multiple sources
- Create a final product using varied structures that illustrates their claim based on synthesis

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

Students demonstrate differentiated proficiency through both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Based on individual student readiness and performance, assessments can be implemented as formative and/or summative.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

Formative:

- Various photo prompts and story starters to provide low risk writing opportunities
- Descriptive language "show and tell" guessing game: Students bring an object from home that they can describe in vivid detail. All objects are displayed. As writer reads their description, class must try to identify the object being described.
- Answer essential questions
- Teacher observations/conferring notes
- Turn and talks
- Partnerships rehearsing their writing
- Peer Conferences/Partnership Discussion and Rehearsing
- Writer's Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites)
- Teacher checklists using mini-lessons for measurable skills
- Writing Conferences: Individual and small group
- Writing Partnership work and discussions
- Writing folders with student work
- Writing pieces to note the growth need of the writer
- Observations
- Listening in on partnership discussion of writing piece
- Drafts online (Google Docs)
- Writing Club work and discussions
- Flashdrafts to provide low stakes writing opportunites (refer to TCWRP p. 22)

Summative including Alternative Assessments:

- Students should have 1-2 final pieces.
- Published pieces
- Score grammar and spelling in final drafts only
- Student portfolios
- During publishing students read their piece to assess oral speaking and reading skills
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Learning Progressions
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Rubrics and Student Samples
- Rubrics: created for the standards-based report card as well as teacher-created.
- On-demand Writing Assessments
- Literary Soundtracks (synthesizing a literary element in a literary work with a popular song - submitted as a Google Slideshow)

- Synthesis essay using provided or student generated paired texts
- Synthesis posters using teacher provided or student generated pair texts

Benchmark Assessments:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics
- Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, grades 3-8, Levels L-Z, Heinemann (part 3, Writing about Reading section)
- New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA)

Learning Plan

Middle School Writing instruction follows a balanced literacy approach including a number of strategies and techniques in Writing Workshop. These include mini-lessons, shared writing, independent writing, small group strategy instruction, one-to-one conferencing, partnerships and/or writing clubs. Writing Workshop emphasizes immersion, independence, and choice. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer. Each unit ends with a celebration of learning where writers share their work with others in the school community.

Lessons should follow the mini-lesson format:

- Teaching point(s) for each lesson
- Connection: Connects new learning to previous learning/lessons
- Teach/Modeling: Uses 'think alouds' when modeling what you expect students to do
- Guided Practice/Active Engagement: Guides students through practice of the teaching point
- Link to Independent Practice: Helps writers understand the purpose for the writing they are about to do and the skills/craft they will be practicing/applying independently as good writers
- Independent Writing/Student Conferences: Provides time for students to do independent writing while teacher confers with individual students, works with small groups, or writing clubs.
- Closure/Sharing: Pull students back together and recognize the work they have done relating to the teaching point.

The architecture of a writing conference includes:

- Research
- Decide
- Teach and Coach with guided practice
- Link

Throughout the year, students write in all modes of rhetoric including narration/description, argument/persuasion, and exposition. A variety of writing forms, including digital writing, are emphasized.

Grammar lessons are embedded in writing instruction, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modeling is done through published and student-crafted mentor texts. Teachers focus equally on process and product with an emphasis on synthesizing across texts for nuanced understandings; teacher-created multi-modal text sets will be used as materials. High-and low-stakes writing and timed and untimed assignments will be used throughout the unit.

Sentence study teaches syntax, diction, grammar, and punctuation. Students will learn how to write like an author by mimicking specific sentence patterns and applying it to their own writing. Please see this grade level folder for details.

Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

This particular unit focuses on developing compelling arguments about characters, ideas, or events; supporting ideas with carefully chosen evidence; and exploring themes, issues, and lessons relevant to the books students read and the lives they live. Students will grow insights and sharpen their analytical writing skills, including their ability to incorporate text evidence. Students will develop their writing fluency in the unit, their ability to express their ideas clearly and support them with lots of detail, with high volume, and at an efficient rate.

This unit also supports students in thinking logically and flexibly and in transferring all they know to their test taking (NJSLA) writing tasks. During this unit students will read short texts and write several pieces to demonstrate they can read and understand sufficiently complex texts independently; write effectively when using and analyzing sources; and build and communicate knowledge by integrating, comparing, and synthesizing ideas.

For this particular unit, teachers should...

- Select texts that mimic NJSLA writing tasks
- Prepare materials for discussion, writing, and synthesis
- Select mentor texts for modeling
- Prepare for conferences and/or small groups with students
- Prepare materials for review of signposts
- Create formative and summative assessments

Materials

The materials used in this course integrate a variety of leveled instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Teachers must refer to the district-approved CORE BOOK LIST while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources. This Middle School ELA folder for grade 7 contains instructional materials for writing.

Suggested Instructional Materials

- Student-generated models to mentor writerly moves, literary elements, and author's craft
- "Chosen" - James Arnold
- "Wonder" - Natale Merchant
- Wonder - R.J. Palacio
- "Making Sara Cry" - Cheryl L. Costello - Forshey
- "First, They Came For the Jews" - Martin Niemoller
- "Change For a Dollar" - Bonnie Maloney
- "Someone Poem" - Jireh Hong
- "Enemy Pie" - Derek Munson
- "Thank You, Ma'am" - Langston Hughes
- "Paper Bag Princess" - Robert Munsch
- "Young Ladies Don't Slay Dragons" - Joyce Hovelsrud
- "Try" - Colbie Caillet
- "Wings" - Macklemore
- Various pop songs & poems
- https://www.commonlit.org/en

Teacher Resources

- *Units of Study in Argument, Informatiion, and Narrative Writing, Grade 7*, Lucy Calkins, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

- Associated Online Resources, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, readingandwritingproject.org
- *Read Write Teach: Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop*, Linda Rief
- *Lessons that Change Writers*, Nancie Atwell
- *In the Middle: New Understandings about Writing, Reading, and Learning*, Nancie Atwell, associated videos
- *Energize Research Reading and Writing,* Chris Lehman, Grades 4-8
- *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action*, Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels
- *Finding the Heart of Nonfiction,* Georgia Heard
- *Patterns of Power: Inviting Young Writers into the Conventions of Language*, Jeff Anderson
- *The Power of Grammar,* Mary Ehrenworth and Vicki Vinton
- *A Writer's Notebook,* Ralph Fletcher
- *Writing a Life,* Katherine Bomer
- *Study Driven*, Katie Wood Ray
- *Thinking Through Genre*, Heather Lattimer
- *Assessing Writers*, Carl Anderson

Synthesis/Informational Resource folder on Cranford Google Drive

Suggested Strategies for Accommodations and Modifications

Content specific accomodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

The structure of writing workshop is designed to differentiate and address specific goals and learning for each writer:

- The unit includes presentation of material through multiple modalities such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic to address the unique learning styles of all students.
- The teacher will assign, assess and modify if necessary to address the specific needs of the learner.
- Students have individualized choice of topics within each unit.
- Instruction provides focused small-group strategy lessons.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer.

Possible accommodations during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts, word walls.
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing.
- Offer graphic organizers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques.
- Offer oral assessments

- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Scaffold by chunking material and texts.
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual
- Use digital technology, eBooks,, audio version of printed text
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; eliminate unnecessary steps, as needed.
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines

Possible modifications to content during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan